

Deutschland unter Allem: Lifting the Conquerors' Heels from Germany

Book Review

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The reason why I have not repeated the oft-told tale of Nazi crimes against humanity is that it is already familiar to every American. It is our own record which is not known, and it seems high time that the victors began to search their own consciences.

Freda Utley, *The High Cost of Vengeance*, p. 303.

In rugby, a “scrum” is a play in which eight players from each side pack themselves together as tightly as possible, and then furiously tussle with each other for the ball when it is tossed into their midst. The treatment of the ball may be compared grimly with that received by Germany at the end of World War II when the four Allied powers marched into the prostrate, bleeding belligerent’s heartland and proceeded to tear its pitiable remains into yet-smaller pieces in an orgy of revenge, self-pride, and the need to make the heinous deeds that had brought them their victory seem justified. Germany, of course, was contended for not by two, but four armies, each with its own agenda inimical to Germany’s future.

Four years after the end of armed conflict, this vicious, violent scrum was still well afoot, and Freda Utley paid a long and extensive visit to the suffering land on commission from *Reader’s Digest* magazine. The book here reviewed¹ is the product of that penetrating inquiry, conducted by a 50-year-old ex-communist woman of English birth who by that time had lived in England, the Soviet Union, China, Japan and the United States and had published at least six extensive studies of nations, their political/economic systems and their wars, including the best-selling *Japan’s Feet of Clay* (1937). The development of her sympathies and career resembled that of her contemporaneous countryman George Orwell, except that she never produced a work of fiction. Like Orwell, she was a devoted socialist, but went on to embrace communism, moving to the Soviet Union and marrying a Russian. Also like Orwell, she developed a profound enmity for totalitarianism and appreciated the vulnerabilities of centrally planned economies to hijacking by dictatorial regimes.



Freda Utley 1943

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The research and writing of this book occurred at what in retrospect may be seen as the nadir of Germany's fortunes in the entire period from the National Socialist takeover in 1933 to the present day. The exact point in time at which her work went to press was after the currency reforms and rollback of economic regulations (price controls, rationing) that had immiserated Germany since 1936, developments that today are hailed as the genesis of the *Wirtschaftswunder* that brought (West) Germany roaring back into the family of nations in the 1950s.

Utley completely failed in this book to anticipate Germany's phenomenal resurrection, and one is tempted to lay this "failing" to Utley's lingering devotion to her socialist ideals, but such a conclusion is dubious on several scores. To begin with, the famous economic initiatives of Ludwig Erhard and Wilhelm Röpke were viewed with serious misgivings by professional economists of all stripes, not just socialists, and it is to be questioned whether Erhard and Röpke themselves were able inwardly to muster quite all the confidence in the outcome that their political challenges required them to manifest outwardly. For another, there was good reason to doubt that the occupying Allies would permit the program to proceed, or even to maintain the changes it had carried out in the brief period between their introduction and the time Utley took her dispiriting snapshot. Finally, it is to be noted that the Erhard/Röpke disjuncture indeed exacted severe costs at its inception, such as the decimation of the value of such savings as at least some Germans had been able to eke out through the tumultuous times that preceded the break. Utley's noting these problems without expressing any optimism for their ultimate effect might indeed have been her tactic to avoid saying anything that could possibly weaken the impetus for changes whose potential benefits she might privately have entertained very high hopes for.

There is no question that Utley, without wishing any ill upon the three Allies of the West, wished the best for chastened Germany, as she had in fact done resolutely at least since 1938, when she supported the Munich Agreement that divided up Czechoslovakia among Germany, Poland and Hungary. After the European war began, she allied herself with the America First movement that aimed at keeping the United States out of the war. And after Germany defeated France in 1940, she advocated a peace treaty between the United Kingdom and Germany. But Utley maintained no illusions about the evils inherent in the National Socialist regime, often comparing them, before the war and after, with those of the communist giant to the east. She did maintain an abiding respect for the prowess of the German war machine, but her primary motivation in assuming the positions she assumed was her intimate familiarity with the limitless propensity for death and destruction inherent in the Soviet regime, a judgment that was vindicated in countless horrific ways in the decades following the war. She regarded Germany, after the war as before, as the West's bulwark against communism, and the fear that communism might engulf Germany and turn its vast potential to its own advantage permeates virtually every paragraph of her profoundly insightful and humane analysis.

The author points an accusing finger at all four of the Allies occupying Germany at the time of her research, but details concerning the Soviet quarter of the action are very slight for at least three reasons: (a) the Soviet Zone of occupation was even by 1948 increasingly separate from the three western zones, in two of which the occupiers spoke English, the language Utley herself worked in (the book was later translated into German and published in Germany); (b) she likely regarded the Soviet

regime as incorrigible of its nature, a conclusion she was able to make with much confidence; and (c) she could not risk traveling in the Soviet Zone, as her husband already by that time had been consigned to the GULAG, and she had good reason to expect the same fate for herself if she should ever set foot in a communist jurisdiction.

Utley acknowledges at a few points in her narrative where this or that stricture of Occupation policy appeared to have been relaxed somewhat, or to be about to be relaxed, even as she at numerous points details ongoing atrocities that she very reasonably feared would drive Germany, however reluctantly, into the arms of the Soviet occupier if only to escape the interminable rapacity of the western Allies. In hindsight, it might be surmised that *The High Cost of Vengeance* had at least some of the effect on western opinion and policy that it aimed at; certainly its effect on any attentive, reasonable reader is compelling in that and only that direction. Knowing this will forever be impossible, while it is known that the book enjoyed healthy sales and critical acclaim from at least some quarters.

At the same time, Utley and her appeal for justice for the defeated Germans attracted considerable criticism from quarters occupied by those favoring eternal suppression of Germany and Germans. And *Vengeance* may claim pride of place on a list that also contains the name of another English Germanophile, David Irving: Deborah Lipstadt's all-encompassing Enemies List of "Holocaust Deniers," this on account of her statement that the Allies' war crimes greatly eclipsed the magnitude of all war crimes committed by the National Socialists.² In the meantime, the entire book contains not one word of denial or justification for the crimes, real and alleged, of which the National Socialists were accused, as the quotation at the beginning of this review illustrates. This failure of denial, or of revision in any case, might also be counted among the book's failings, except for the facts that by 1948, World War II revisionism had not even begun, and that the matter was in any case altogether outside the book's brief. So Utley wisely accepted all accusations, and pressed her argument forward with quite undiminished force. She did, however, excoriate both the Nuremberg Tribunal and other trials, such as those at Dachau, conducted by the Allies as utterly unjudicial paroxysms of revenge and condemnation visited without discrimination upon the innocent as well as the guilty.

The cruel and vicious acts of each of the occupying powers must have seared the consciences of citizens of those powers as they read line after line, page after page, and chapter after chapter of injustice and inhumanity being committed in their names. The exposé, meticulously sourced and confirmed at each outrageous step, detailed the nefarious purposes and tendencies animating the occupying forces, with emphasis, as noted, on those of the three Western powers in which Utley reposed some hope of redemption, if only on the score of preventing Germany from falling into the orbit of the communist behemoth that they all feared.

France as an occupying power was seen primarily as territorially vengeful. Understandably, the French were inspired by revenge engendered by the National Socialists' invasion and occupation of most of France that began in 1940. Although on nothing like the scale of the Soviet Union's depredations to Germany's east, France undertook various territorial initiatives against formerly German territory, including the Saarland, which remained an "autonomous region" until 1957, and much of Germany's industrial heartland of the Ruhr. France undertook a plebiscite in the Saarland in which dire consequences for the voters were threatened if they did not vote to merge with France; they called France's bluff and voted in a landslide against the merger nonetheless.

Britain as an occupying power was motivated primarily by commercial and industrial rivalry with Germany that went back long before both of the world wars. British dismantlings and destruction of already-shattered German industrial capabilities were wanton and devastating, but as history has demonstrated, they ultimately failed either to greatly hamper Germany's eventual development or much to bolster their own industrial prowess.

The US forces in Germany committed their offenses under the urge for revenge for Germany's anti-Jewish policies during and prior to the war. The deliberately ruinous details of the Morgenthau Plan were well-known both to Uteley and to the United States administration, if not its public, and had by late 1948 been extensively repudiated and officially discontinued. But Uteley noted innumerable instances of this inhuman plan's remaining in near-full force through the agency of second- and third-tier officials who were German Jews who had emigrated to America before the war and had now returned in the uniform of the conqueror to exact revenge on their people's erstwhile malefactors. Nothing short of an outright purge could cure this disease afflicting the body of the occupying administration, and nothing of the sort seemed in prospect at the time of Uteley's investigation.

Freda Uteley's wisdom and insight as presented in *The High Cost of Vengeance* have been vindicated a thousandfold in the half-century since her shocking tale was published. A 2013 poll conducted by the BBC found Germany the most-admired country in the world—quite a contrast from the reviled outcast from western civilization depicted by her opponents in the last world war, and still, as the Folks Who Brought You the Holocaust.

None could be happier, I'm sure, that her dire fears ultimately went unrealized than Freda Uteley herself.

Notes:

- 1 The book is available for free download in .pdf form at <http://vho.org/dl/ENG/thcov.pdf>
- 2 "Only one thing is certain: Hitler's barbaric liquidation of the Jews has been outmatched by the liquidation of Germans by the "democratic, peace-loving" powers of the United Nations." p. 202.

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